

Random Encounters

Monks of the Burning Tiger - Rod of the Burning Tiger

By Eric Cagle



Rod of the Burning Tiger

Magoun held the rod before him in a single hand, his muscles bulging with wiry strength. He did not seem to notice the black flames that roiled from the rod and licked up his arms. His steely gaze swept across the ranks of black-clad monks before him, who stood rock steady in their fighting stance. "If any of you can take the rod of the burning tiger, symbol of our dedication and might, from my grasp, you shall be named leader of this school," he bellowed. No one moved.

With an annoyed growl, Magoun pressed a button on the rod. It sprang to life, transforming first into a quarterstaff, then an exotic bladed polearm, and finally into twin kamas, held firmly in his grasp. A subtle almost inaudible roar of a tiger seemed to come from the weapons he held. As if on cue, the monks charged as one. The weapons in Magoun's hand morphed as he twirled among them, cutting them down like grass. In mere seconds, he was the only one standing.

"The lesson is complete," he said with a sigh. The rod in his hand began to purr like a contented tiger.



The *rod of the burning tiger* is the most coveted item of the monastery of the same name. The Burning Tiger monks are an evil group that practices their craft in order to rule their land with an iron fist. Their leader, the evil monk Magoun, commonly wields it in combat. The monks will fight to the death to make sure that it does not fall into the hands of anyone but one of their order. When not in use, the rod resides on an altar of jade within the monastery of the monks, which is located in the heart of a burning plain of lava.

At 3 feet long, the *rod of the burning tiger* is larger than most magic rods. It is a thick, black shaft of iron, with numerous fierce tigers carved upon it. These tigers seem to move on their own accord when the rod is still. The ends of the rod are capped with black iron. A nimbus of black, heatless flame constantly flickers about the rod. When used in combat, the rod releases bursts of black (and intensely hot) flame and a stench of brimstone.

In its regular form, the rod acts like a +2 *flaming burst light mace*. The following spell-like functions can each be used once per day, all as if cast by a 12th-level sorcerer:

- *Haste* on the wielder.
- *Cat's grace* on the wielder.
- *Magic circle against chaos* centered on the rod.

There are four small hidden buttons along the side that turn the rod into a variety of monk weapons. Pressing the first button (and requiring a standard action) separates the rod in two and curved blades spring out from either end, turning them into two +1 *flaming burst kamas*. By placing the rods together and pressing the button (a standard action), the rod resumes its original form.

The second button elongates the rod, and two crescent shape blades spring out at either end, turning the rod into a +1 *flaming burst lajatang* (both ends). It requires a standard action to activate or deactivate this ability.

The third button transforms the rod into a +2 *flaming burst three-section staff*. It is a standard action to activate or deactivate this ability.

The last button elongates the rod into a +2 *flaming burst quarterstaff* (both ends). It is a standard action to activate or deactivate this ability.

The *rod of the burning tiger* is a lawful item and any chaotic character attempting to wield it gains two negative levels. These negative levels remain as long as the rod is in hand and they disappear when the rod is no longer wielded. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including *restoration* spells) while the rod is wielded.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Rod, *cat's grace*, *haste*, *magic circle against chaos*, *magic weapon*, *order's wrath*, *produce flame*; **Market Price:** 192,016 gp.

Bringing the Parts Together

If the PCs haven't yet stumbled across the Burning Tiger monks, perhaps they are sent out on a mission to find out as much as possible about an item called the *rod of the burning tiger*.

Coming in Part 5 of the Monks of the Burning Tiger

The Trial of the Burning Tiger may bring about the death of more than one participant.

